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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION KUWAIT, MAY 2-5: ABUSE OF IRAQI PRISONERS
AT ABU GHARIB

1. SUMMARY: Outrage and bitter cynicism characterize many editorials addressing the reported abuse of Iraqi prisoners by coalition forces, highlighting "similiarities" between Saddam's regime and US forces, including the location of the incidents at Abu Gharib prison which was notorious under Saddam's regime. One commentator writes that these alleged incidents "justify fighting an illegal occupation," while another states: "Had these mercenaries not been hiding behind American military uniforms, they would not have dared commit such acts, and Iraqis would not have to ambush, shoot, kill, mutilate and drag their bodies through the streets."

One writer attacks the comparison made between Saddam's regime and US forces in Iraq by pointing out that the acts were brought to light by "Americans with a conscience against these practices carried out by their own colleagues." A prominent liberal commentator contrasts the accountability for the reported abuses necessitated by the "free Western press" with "similar practices committed everyday" in the Arab world that "we never hear about."
END SUMMARY.

2. "Abu Gharib"

Bandar Al-Dhafiri wrote in independent Al-Seyassah (5/3): "Once again, regrettably, we see the similarities between Saddam Hussein's regime and the United States of America, in Abu Gharib. Abu Gharib was the source of real terror for Iraqis during Saddam's regime. Therefore, it was stunning to see the extent of the "civilized American achievements" which exceeded all expectations. Does the United States realize that by such inhumane practices, it literally gave the Iraqis the justification to fight an illegal occupation?"

3. "Coalition's Shame revealed"

Dr. Yaser Al-Saleh wrote in independent Al-Rai Al-A'am (5/4): "The reaction of President Bush and his subordinate, Tony Blair, to the latest torture scandals perpetrated by the coalition against Iraqi prisoners was expected. First they stress the ignorance factor, then the promise that an investigation would take place, and then they make a sacrifice of someone. Of course, such responses wouldn't necessarily elicit belief. The GMEI, a project advocated by Bush and Blair, that would allegedly achieve freedom and democracy in our region, was exposed by the Iraqis as a lie. Iraqis have demonstrated their response to this project as should the rest of the peoples of this region."

4. "Iraqi Detainees And American Violations"

Dr. Issa Al-Enezi Professor of International Law at Kuwait University wrote in interdependent Al-Rai Al-A'am (5/4): "The Pentagon's threat to issue an administrative rebuke against those who abused Iraqi detainees does not absolve the overall responsibility of the United States. Had these mercenaries not been hiding behind American military uniform, they would not have dared commit such acts, and Iraqis would not have had to ambush, shoot, kill, mutilate and drag their bodies through the streets."

5. "Deviance In The American Military"

Dr. Abdel Muhsin Jamal wrote in independent Al-Qabas (5/5): "Pictures depicting the disgusting practices of the American and British military, against Iraqi detainees, not only offend the American and British people, but also offend humanity as a whole. The occupation forces claimed that they came to Iraq to save Iraqis from Saddam's tyranny and brutality. However, individuals from the American and British military not only committed similar practices, but worse, by allowing humiliating pictures to be taken of the detainees."

6. "Damn This Democracy"

Mohammed Musaad Al-Saleh wrote in independent Al-Qabas (5/2): "The major story these days is the pictures broadcast by the American CBS channel showing Iraqi prisoners in demeaning positions, being tortured. Sympathizers with the American occupiers may argue that Iraqis had done the same to Kuwaitis during their invasion of Kuwait in 1990. However, such inhumane acts are indeed condemned whether perpetrated by Americans or by Iraqis. Everyone around the world condemned this revolting American act."

7. "Free Media"

Ghassan al-Otaibi wrote in independent Al-Qabas (5/5): "Some have greatly exaggerated equating the coalition forces with Saddam Hussein's regime. Some went to the extent of describing the coalition as more bloodthirsty than Saddam. But, ask yourselves, who took the pictures of the Iraqi prisoners? Weren't they Americans with a conscience, weren't they against these practices carried out by their own colleagues? We are against all kinds of torture and inhuman acts, but thank God it was the American media who exposed these practices, and not some Arab channel. President Bush and Tony Blair rushed to condemn such acts and demanded accountability. What Saddam did to the Iraqis and Kuwaitis is more than what Hitler did to Jews in the holocaust and more than what Sharon did to the Palestinians, Lebanese and Syrians."

18. "Big Difference Between Two Occupations"

Ali Ahmad Al-Baghli wrote in independent Al-Qabas (5/2): "The incidents of torture, committed by some American soldiers against Iraqi detainees, elicited condemnation from President Bush and a promise to punish the perpetrators. I wonder, how many Arab generals, colonels, lieutenants and captains committed the same acts-- acts that are still being committed everyday that we don't see or hear about, although such practices are considered quite normal inside our prisons? The difference between the West and us is that we don't have a transparent and free press. Mistakes happen everywhere, but the difference is in that [the American] press publishes all and everyone is accountable."

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